

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-03 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03
LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 AID-05 SS-15 STR-04
ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01 FEA-01
/087 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9620

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONKI

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ETRD, GR

SUB: GREEK IMPORT RESTRICTIONS ON BANANAS

REF: A) 76 ATHENS 10644; B) 76 ATHENS 9751; C) 76 STATE 214199

1. IN A MARCH 21 CALL ON DEPUTY COORDINATION MINISTER KONTOGIORGHIS, ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR WAS INFORMED THAT THE GOG ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS CONTINUING TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF GREEK RESTRICTIONS ON BANANA IMPORTS. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, EMBASSY IS CLOSELY FOLLOWING GOG ACTION ON THESE RESTRICTIONS, WHICH SINCE 1969 HAVE CLOSED OFF THE 30,000-TON-PER-YEAR GREEK BANANA MARKET. WE ARE IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF COORDINATION, COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE MINISTRIES TO ADVANCE THE CASE OF U.S. BANANA SUPPLIERS.

2. KONTOGIORGHIS REPORTS THAT AT LAST WEEK'S ECONOMIC COUNCIL MEETING, REPORTS ON BANANAS WERE PRESENTED BY MINISTERS OF COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE. ACCORDING TO KONTOGIORGHIS, COORDINATION AND COMMERCE

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MINISTRIES FAVORED REMOVAL OF BANANAS FROM COMMODITY IMPORT LIST A, WHICH REQUIRES SPECIAL MINISTERIAL APPROVAL FOR IMPORT LICENSES AND EFFECTIVELY CUTS OF IMPORTS. OBJECTIONS TO RESUMED IMPORTS WERE, HOWEVER, PRESENTED BY AGRICULTURE MINISTER BOUTOS, AND DECISION WAS POSTPONED PENDING FURTHER REPORTS FROM COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE MINISTRIES TO BE

PRESENTED AT LATER MEETING RESCHEDULED FOR MID-APRIL.
IN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH BOUTOS SEVERAL WEEKS
AGO, ECONOMIC COUNSELOR LEARNED THAT THE PRIMARY OBJECTION
APPEARS TO BE THE FEAR THAT IMPORTED BANANAS WILL
SUBSTITUTE FOR SUCH DOMESTIC FRUITS AS APPLES AND
ORANGES.

3. SUBSTANCE OF ABOVE HAS BEEN PASSED TO UNITED FOOD
ASSOCIATE M. MAURICIDES OF LOCAL FIRM ETANEX S.A.
LATTER HAS BEEN IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH COMATT OVER PAST
SEVERAL MONTHS AND APPEARS TO APPRECIATE EMBASSY
EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF US FRUIT SUPPLIERS. MAURICIDES
IS PURSUING BANANA ISSUE INDEPENDENTLY TO DEVELOP
SUPPORT FOR WAIVER OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS FROM GOG
OFFICIALS AND GREEK FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES
(PASEGES). MAURICIDES ALSO CLAIMS TO BE IN CONTACT WITH
OFFICE OF SENATOR KENNEDY ON THIS ISSUE.

4. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT CURRENT
GOG POLICY RESTRICTING BANANA IMPORTS CONSTITUTES
DISCRIMINATORY ACTION AND WILL REFER TO ISSUE
IN FURTHER CONTACTS WITH GOG OFFICIALS. WE WILL REPORT
RESULTS OF NEXT ECONOMIC COUNCIL MEETING ON THIS
SUBJECT AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.
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